

Echo of Mary Queen of Peace

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Our Lady's message, 25 November 2008:

“Dear children! Also today I call you, in this time of grace, to pray for little Jesus to be born in your heart. May He, who is peace itself, give peace to the entire world through you. Therefore, little children, pray without ceasing for this turbulent world without hope, so that you may become witnesses of peace for all. May hope begin to flow through your hearts as a river of grace. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

So that Hope might be born...

On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. So says Jesus to his own (John 14,20) and that day is the time of the action of the Spirit of Truth that Jesus promised to those who respect his commandments (John 14, 15-17). And Paul: *I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me* (Galatians 2, 20). And Mary: **Dear Children, again today I invite you during this time of grace to pray so that the little Jesus might be born in your hearts.** This is the mystery that has been hidden for centuries and generations...that is, Christ in you, hope of glory (Col 1, 26-27). The incarnation of Jesus, his birth in man, reveals that man can contain God.

Now there is no longer any separation between man and God: the creature is reconciled with his Creator. Now there is no longer any distance between man and God: God is in man. Now the Revelation is complete, it is definitive. Now it is our turn to welcome it in fullness and in all of its capacity, without adapting it to ourselves, but actually, allowing the Spirit to mould us in It. It is not enough to call ourselves children: we must be children, live as children. It is not enough to imitate Jesus: we need to let Jesus live in us, be children in the Son. Our human abilities are not sufficient: we need sacramental life. The Sacraments are an irreplaceable aid but they should be experienced: it is not enough to simply receive them. *I am the fruit of the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross*, but we must let ourselves be nourished by this fruit, keep its seeds in our hearts and in our souls until such time as they bloom and grow and mature in a plant of eternal Life.

Then Jesus will be alive in us and we will take Him everywhere we are, without efforts, without artifices, in a wholly simple and natural manner, like the breath that we breathe, like the palpitations that we do not feel but that keep us alive. Let us pray with Mary, let us invite her to pray with us, so that truly, really, **Jesus might be born in our hearts.** Are



THE HEART OF THE PAULINE YEAR

“Saint Paul had understood that being righteous simply means being with Christ and in Christ. And this is sufficient. Other observations are no longer necessary... Faith is looking towards Christ, entrusting ourselves to Christ, attaching ourselves to Christ, conforming to Christ, to his life. And the form, the life of Christ, is love”.

Benedict XVI

we dirty? It doesn't matter: Our Mother will clean us, she will tidy us up, she will make us suitable for fulfilling what she asks; it is sufficient for us to really want it, for us to ardently desire this. And how can we not want this? *Creation itself is impatiently waiting for the revelation of God's children* (Rom 8, 19) and Mary is urging us so that Jesus, **who is the only peace, might give peace to the whole world through us.** Isn't this a wonderful duty? Actually, much more: it is a divine duty and we can only fulfil it if Jesus lives in us. But this is Mary's, Jesus', the Father's wish, this is what the Spirit expects to fulfil in us and he will fulfil it *divinely* as soon as we give our free consent. What are we waiting for?

Let us pray incessantly for this turbulent and hopeless world. Incessant prayer, insistent prayer moves God, it almost forces him to grant the grace requested. Let us expand our prayer from the closed circle of our friendships to the whole world, let us make ourselves **witnesses of peace for everyone.** **The world is turbulent and hopeless.** It is waiting for peace from us, that peace that only He can give us, that peace that does not exist outside of Him. That peace that is the end of all turbulence because it rests in God, it lives in Him. **Let peace flow within our hearts like a river of grace** that restores and regenerates everything that it laps (Ref Ez 47, 1-12).

Nuccio Quattrocchi

Our Lady's message, 25 December 2008:

“Dear children! You are running, working, gathering – but without blessing. You are not praying! Today I call you to stop in front of the manger and to meditate on Jesus, Whom I give to you today also, to bless you and to help you to comprehend that, without Him, you have no future. Therefore, little children, surrender your lives into the hands of Jesus, for Him to lead you and protect you from every evil. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

You have no future without Jesus

Blessing is a divine action that gives life and of which the Father is the source...From the beginning to the end of all time, all God's work is blessing (Catechism of the Catholic Church, texts 1078 and 1079). Imploring a divine blessing on somebody or something means exposing it to Life, it means directing it towards the fullness of life that comes from the Father. **Dear children, you run, you work, you gather but without blessing.** In these words there is the bitterness of a Mother who is aware of the fact that without blessing the fruit is not adequate for the effort, life is a blind, frenetic agitation that consumes more than what it produces, that destroys more than what it builds.

Sucked in by an ever more swirling present, we lose the sense of the transcendent; we conceal ourselves within the present instant, forgetting the past, uninterested in the future. The profound essence of what we are escapes us, the importance of what we do, of what we see, of what we touch, of what we want. We are losing the sense of things, of our actions, of what is good and what is evil. “*See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you... (Dt 30, 15 – 16).*”

You cannot enter Life without God's blessing; the alternative to the blessing is the curse (Dt 11 26-28) We cannot live without Him, without *communicating with Him*, that is, without praying. *Pray incessantly*, Paul warns us (1 Ts 5, 17). But: **You do not pray!** Mary says to us. And “not praying” means not paying attention to God, not turning to Him, not communicating with Him, in other words, it means excluding him from our lives or, in the same way, excluding ourselves from His Life, living without a future *is like grass that grows up in the morning and is cut down in the evening* (Ref Psalm 89 (90)).

Today I invite you to linger in front of the crib and meditate on Jesus whom I give to you today also, so that he might bless you and help you to understand that you have no future without Him. Let us take this invita-

tion into serious consideration. First of all, the **crib**: this simple, humble, wonderful homage to Jesus and Mary promoted by Saint Francis of Assisi in Greccio in 1223, is still an expression of faith and prayer for the Catholic people today; Mary invites us to **linger** in front of it. To grasp its profound meaning, to make it an instrument of prayer, it is not sufficient to quickly pass in front of it; we need to **stop in front of the crib**. We need to take in what it expresses, we need to grasp its message, and we need to enter into the Event.

I invite you to meditate on Jesus, whom I give to you again today, Mary says to us; not only the historical memory of the Event but its renewal today. Today too, Mary gives us the gift of Jesus. She does not give us a memory, she gives us Jesus: we can refuse him or welcome him; but if we welcome him, we must welcome him like He is. Not an idea, a plan, a rule, but God-Man, God who comes in Man, God who comes in you, in me, to live in each of us. His Presence in us is the greatest, stable, definitive blessing from Him, to refuse this Presence means to refuse Life; **without Him we have no future**, *without Him we cannot do anything* (John 15, 5b). *Oh Father, accept our offering on this night of light, and through this mysterious exchange of gifts, transform us into Christ your Son, who raised man up, alongside you, in glory* (Offertory of the Mass of the night of Christmas). *I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me* (Galatians 2, 20). **Therefore, children, abandon your lives into Jesus' hands so that He might guide you and protect you from all evil.**

N.Q.

Briefly

◆ One million Bibles will be distributed this new year by the international Ecumenical community of Taizé, through "Operation hope". This is "a sign of love and communion for the people of China", said the Prior of the community, Brother Alois.

◆ "Man cannot live on bread alone!", warn the French Bishops in a document that opposes the planned law for work on Sundays. For Christians above all, Sunday is a day of rest and also of freedom from evil through the resurrection of Christ. "The Sunday gathering celebrates the "celestial banquet" in advance, and the hope for the return of the Lord. At the same time, the Sunday Mass expresses the meaning and the aim of the life of Christians", explains the document.

◆ "Fight poverty, build peace" is the theme of World Peace Day. In his message, the Pope explained that there is: "The poverty that is chosen and proposed by Jesus on the one hand, and the poverty to be fought against to make the world more righteous and united on the other". In fact, "There is a poverty, an indigence, that God does not want and that should be "fought". In order to put an end to this unjust poverty that oppresses so many men and women and that threatens everyone's peace, we need to rediscover two evangelical and universal values: sobriety and solidarity". In actual fact, "we cannot effectively fight misery, if we do not reduce the inequality between those who waste the superfluous and those who are even lacking the essential".

The year dedicated to the figure of Saint Paul continues and his work continues to arouse a significant amount of interest. As we know, his work is one of the biblical fundamentals on which the Church and in general the pathway of every Christian lies. Everywhere there are many initiatives aimed at developing the Apostle's awareness of the people and the inheritance left by him: a very rich patrimony from which we can continuously draw teachings and examples.

But above all, it is on the anniversary of his conversion, the 25th of January, the date that also closes the traditional octave of prayer for the unity of Christians, that the Roman Basilica of Saint Paul will be particularly populated. In fact, official representatives of the different Christian confessions will come from all over the world for the celebration of the solemn Vespers presided over by Pope Benedict XVI.

In his preaching, the Holy Father never fails to mention the extracts from Paul's letters, as a testimony of the completeness of Paul's thought and the universal capacity of his message. We will outline some of his considerations below regarding two themes that were dear to Saint Paul: the second coming of Christ and evangelisation.

"Do not fear the coming of the Lord!"

"When faced with the parousia, that is, the latest coming of Jesus, **Christians must adopt three types of behaviour**: absence of fear, hope and faith in divine mercy", explains the Holy Father.

Firstly, one of the essential effects of Christian preaching in the ancient world, as in the current pagan world, was freedom from fear, "the fear of the spirits, of the evil powers that threaten us. Christ lives, he has conquered death and he has won over all these powers. In this certainty, in this freedom, in this joy we live. This is the first aspect of our living with regard to the future".

Secondly, he added, "**in Christ the world of the future has already commenced**, this also gives the certainty of hope. Without Christ, the future is dark for the world today also, **there is lots of fear for the future**. The Christian knows that the light of Christ is stronger and therefore he lives in a hope that is not vague, in a hope that gives certainty and courage to face the future".

Thirdly, the Christian must always adopt a behaviour of responsibility for the world: "Working and knowing in our responsibility that God is a true judge, we are also sure that this judge is good, we know his face, the face of the risen Christ, of Christ crucified for us. Therefore we can be sure of his goodness and go onwards with great courage". Only if we cultivate it in our hearts can this experience "make the sufferings of the present moment tolerable, they are not comparable with future glory".

The fundamental message that Saint Paul transmits in the letter to the Thessalonians regarding the return of Christ, beyond the images with which he describes him, is that "**our future is 'being with the Lord'**", regarding believers, in our life we are already with the

Lord, our future, eternal life, has already begun".

Throughout the entire period of Advent, in the liturgy, the Church repeated: "Maranà thà!", which literally means "Come, our Lord!". "Can we too also pray in this manner?", Benedict XVI asks himself. "It seems to me that for us today, in our life, in our world, it is difficult to pray sincerely so that this world might perish, **so that the new Jerusalem might come**, so that the last judgement and the judge Christ might come.... And yet we must pray that "the world might be fundamentally changed, that the civilisation of love might commence, that a world of justice, peace, without violence, without hunger might come. We want all of this: and how can this happen without the presence of Christ?"

(from the General Audience of 12th November 2008).

"Only those who have met him...."

The theme of evangelisation is more current than ever during our era, which is marked profoundly by that which the Holy Father calls the curse of "relativism". Paul's ability to bring the annunciation of the kingdom to all peoples, today becomes an essential requirement in order to topple the walls of indifference and disinterestedness that surround man's heart and that defend an ever-growing and worrying individualism. For this reason, the Pope reminds us how the concept of Saint Paul's apostolate "went beyond that linked only to the group of the Twelve".

But what makes a true apostle of a man? The Pontiff explains: "In Paul's writings there are **three main characteristics that make the apostle**, the first is that of having "seen the Lord", that is, of having had a meeting with him that was determining for one's own life". Beginning from this meeting in fact, Paul began his mission, because he who had persecuted the Church ferociously "could not continue to live like before, now he felt invested by the Lord with the duty to announce his Gospel as an apostle".

Although he always felt unworthy, Paul is sure of his apostolate because "it is in it that the fertility of God's grace is expressed, **God who knows how to transform a flawed man into a wonderful apostle**". "Definitively, it is the Lord who constitutes someone in the apostolate, not one's own presumption. **The apostle is not self-made**, he is made as he is by the Lord; therefore, the apostle needs to constantly relate to the Lord", underlines the Pope.

"Having been sent", that is, being an "ambassador and bearer of a message". This is the second characteristic. Paul defines himself as an apostle of Jesus beginning from the fact that the initiative was only Christ's: "from Him a mission was received, to be fulfilled in his name, putting all personal interest in second place".

Finally, dedicating one's own life to this mission is the third characteristic. "That of "apostle", in fact, is not and cannot be an honorary title. It fully and dramatically involves the entire existence of the party involved", the Pontiff reminds us. And so those who wish

to be one of Jesus Christ's credible apostles cannot but personally **pay the dear price of the annunciation**: "Nobody like Paul has highlighted how the annunciation of the cross of Christ appears to be "scandal and stupidity", to which many people react with incomprehension and refusal. This happened at that time and we must not be surprised that the same thing also happens today". But these sufferings cannot "crush" because they are always accompanied by the "joy of being the bearer of God's blessing and of the grace of the Gospel".

"This is the certainty, the deep joy that guides the apostle Paul throughout all of these events: nothing can separate us from God's love. And this love is the true wealth of human life", the Pontiff concluded.

Editorial Staff

A new blossoming for astronomy

2009 marks the celebration of the fourth centenary since **Galileo Galilei's** first observations thanks to the telescope. This event inspired UNESCO to proclaim **World Astronomy Year**. Pope Benedict XVI has recalled this initiative on several occasions, underlining the fact that we are currently seeing a "new blossoming" in this field, "thanks to the passion and faith of many scientists, who – following in Galileo's footsteps – do not renounce either reason or faith, but actually value both to the utmost, in their reciprocal fertility".

Perhaps not everyone knows that in the far of 1600's, Galileo was **condemned by the Church** for his convictions on the theory of the earth moving around the sun, which, according to the Holy Office, contradicted what was written in the Bible according to the Holy Spirit, and that is, that the earth was the immobile centre of the universe. John Paul II was the one who re-qualified the reputation of the Florentine mathematician after no less than 300 years of scientific research.

A few months ago, the new pope returned to address the subject again: "Christian thought compares the cosmos to a "book" – so said Galileo also – considering it as the work of an author", according to this book, he affirmed, "it is divine love, incarnated in Christ, that is the fundamental and universal law of creation. This should not be understood in a poetic sense, but in a real sense. This means that the stars, the planets, the whole universe are not governed by a blind force, they do not obey the dynamics of matter only".

Astronomy therefore is also at the centre of many people's attention in the Church: "Among my predecessors of venerated memory – recalled the Pope – there were experts in this science". It is worth noticing that the **Specola Vaticana**, founded in 1578 by Gregory XIII, is among the most ancient astronomy observatories.

But why does astronomy attract the Church's attention so much? First of all we see how the rhythm of the religious celebrations are inserted into the lunar and solar cycles. Easter is combined with the equinox and the full moon and "the position of the feast of Christmas is associated with the Winter solstice, when the days in the northern hemisphere start to get long again" the Pope recalled this in one of his Christmas homilies.

Astronomy has always made its contribution to the field of sacred architecture also: "ancient cathedrals were veritable cosmic representations. Their orientation indicated the cardinal points, the solar clock dictated the hours of the day... This reminds us of the function of astronomy in articulating prayer times", continues Benedict XVI.

There is also another important factor. Gazing towards the heavens helps man to put himself in the right perspective before God, that is, it allows him to admit his smallness and to make space for the wonder that leads to true adoration, as is the case for the Wise Men from the East. It is for this reason that **the observation of the universe** is felt by the Church to be a **veritable service of praise to the Creator**: "If the heavens "narrate the glory of God", as the psalm says, the laws of nature are also a great stimulus in contemplating

the Lord's works with a sense of gratitude".

It is a great opportunity for all of us, God's people on our pathway, to allow ourselves to be attracted by what the Church will succeed in developing in this "astronomical year", in the awareness that the birth of the Creator of the universe on earth actually has a cosmic capacity. The mystery of God who becomes man, in fact, answers every man's need and the need of all of creation, as the Pope also stated: "Apart from its historical dimension, this mystery of salvation also has a cosmic dimension: **Christ is the sun of grace**, which, with its light, transfigures and enlightens the universe that is waiting... It is not therefore the cosmic element that should be divinised, but the opposite, in everything and beyond everything, there is a personal will, the Spirit of God, which revealed itself in Christ as Love".

Editorial Staff

SIMPLE THOUGHTS by Pietro Squassabia

Like flowers in the garden

Simple and unassuming flowers can create pleasant flowerbeds like no other flower can manage to produce on its own even if it is very beautiful. The expert work of a gardener is obviously necessary to arrange them in a suitable manner, in soil that is appropriate for the garden, which is well fertilized and irrigated. They may even be almost insignificant flowers but if well arranged alongside each other, they can create a pleasant and harmonious view. But a flower will only grow freely if it allows itself to be "guided", developing its utmost abilities, if there, where the gardener put it, it does not stumble upon obstacles, such as unsuitable soil, briars and anything else that may impede vigorous and beautiful growth. As long as the gardener takes care of the flowers.

This gardener refers us back to another "gardener", the celestial gardener, God, who arranged a beautiful garden on earth, with stupendous flowerbeds, although consisting of humble and simple "flowers" - human beings. Here, the "celestial gardener" assigned a precise place to the "flowers", according to the soil that is most suitable for each of them, on the basis of the irrigation and the fertilizer considered to be most appropriate for each flower. Here, positioned harmoniously one alongside the other and not isolated, the "flowers" grow freely and splendidly because they are not impeded by stones, briars or weeds, that the gardener knows how to remove. Yes, here the "flowers" are free to love with the love of God, to think with God's thoughts, to want according to God's wishes. Here, in God's garden, man can experience what is true. For this reason he is free to love everyone, even those who are indifferent or who cause him to suffer. He has no reservations for anyone.

This is the look of the *new land*, that houses the flowering garden that Jesus, coming onto the earth, came to bring: where everyone, without "stones" to impede them, is given the ability to love everyone, with no exclusions, with the same love of God. Mary invites us to grow in the beautiful flowering garden prepared by her Son: it is up to us to confirm our willingness. Here, Mary lets us grow as splendid flowers, if we let her work.

Beyond appearance

A newborn baby, a fragile and defenceless little body, this is the appearance of God who comes to earth. This is the form in which he chose to express his love to us. Certainly Jesus, *hidden treasure*, believed this to be the best way to come among us. He is the Treasure contained in a "vase" that is not precious and robust, but a *clay vase*, that is fragile and precarious like the human body. He could have chosen a resistant and prized "vase" and yet no, he preferred a humble vase of clay, perhaps to help us understand that what seems strong and is ostentatious, often obscures the Treasure, making it impossible to find.

Already on many occasions in the past, God said, also through the prophets, that *he does not look at appearance but at the heart* (1 Sam 16, 7). But man was unable to understand and do what was said to him: to look beyond appearance. And so the Father sent his Son to give man this ability: to truly see beyond appearance, to be able to catch a glimpse of God in creation, in everyday people. In this way, every meeting with our neighbour can become an occasion during which to meet with God. It is up to us, now, to grasp this possibility that is given to us, this gift. Only in this manner will we be able to contemplate God's beauty in creatures, only in this way every person, regardless of how he presents himself, will be seen as an expression of God's love, only in this way will we be able to thank our God for all his wonders.

What a great gift! If we preserve it, perhaps we will understand that the love of Jesus always passes through his brother, without the preferences that we make. Then we will be able to discover the Treasure even where we don't imagine that we will find it. With a humble heart, we will be able to know the many occasions that are given to us to meet the Lord. Then perhaps, we will discover that Mary came to Medjugorje to show the Treasure, beyond all appearances. Thank you Jesus, because through your coming, you allow us to meet you, you who are God, and also your Mother and ours, beyond all appearances. Thank you Jesus, because you let us understand that love alone, the source of which lies in You, can let us see beyond all appearance. □

MARY, STAR of HOPE

by Giuseppe Ferraro

There are many authoritative voices within the Church, but also in lay culture that now agree in identifying the obscure evil that torments the world in a generalised eclipse of hope. We are in fact being pursued more and more by a crowd of fearful spectres with many faces: terrorism, devastating economic crises, the rapid collapse of fundamental values, that seem to irreparably threaten the future of the world and more solidly, of our life and that of those who live alongside us. The false hopes fed by the great utopian ideologies of the last century have also disastrously collapsed, leaving fragments of a distressing nothingness behind.

The most acute spiritual aggression nowadays seems aimed at making the hope that lies in the hearts of men die. Hope, in fact, is indissolubly linked to Faith and Charity by its essential nature, it represents the incarnate expression of the presence of the Life of God in the souls of his children. *"Pray children in a special way because Satan is strong and he wants to destroy the hope in your hearts"* (Message 25.08.1994).

Although it beneficially illuminates all the dimensions of human life and action, Christian Hope still belongs to an essentially different order from all others that were subjected to the conditioning and socio economic occurrences of the world. It in fact has a precise object and name: "eternal life" as the stable, full communion with Life and with the Heart of God, towards which the Queen of Peace has been tirelessly calling her children for more than twenty-seven years. *"For Christians there is a single behaviour to adopt as regards the future: the hope of salvation"* (Message 10.06.1982) *"I want to show you the pathway towards eternal life."* (Message 02.02.1990).

Mary is undoubtedly the true Mother and Mistress of Hope. In fact, if Abraham "had faith against all hope and thus became the Father of many peoples" (Rm 4,18), Mary did much more so in her "roaming in faith" which comes to a climax at the foot of the Cross, she becomes the Mother of the redeemed, bearing witness to all generations regarding what is the supreme measure of

Christian hope. In fact, as the prophetic word of the 2nd Vatican Council proclaims (*Lumen Gentium No. 68*): "The Mother of Jesus... now shines before God's wandering people as a sign of safe hope and consolation, until such time as the Lord's day shall come (ref. 2 Pt 3,10)".

The grace that God gives to the world today through the Queen of Peace, well beyond every precious doctrinal enunciation, strikes the body and soul of her children, calling them to experience an unimaginable love, given as a gift from above, "if you knew how much I love you, you'd cry tears of joy!" (Message 01.03.1982). Only this intimate "knowledge" of the mystery of the boundless Love of God that flows from the Heart of Christ and Mary can make us true makers of hope. Being able to spiritually "touch" God's Heart through Her; the entire celestial Church, in fact, represents the truest and most precious gift of the grace of Medjugorje.

The Queen of Peace opens up a horizon of light for us, that goes beyond Hope, allowing us at the same time, to savour all of its fullness. In fact, already in the present, she makes that mystery of communion with Trinitarian Life that is the object of Christian Hope liveable and "visible". "But hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" (Rm 8,24).

We are therefore deeply convinced that it is only by unconditionally welcoming this extraordinary gift that God offers us in this time, through the Queen of Peace, that it will be truly possible to "open up the pathways of hope" to the world of today and to the full realisation of the universal mission of the Church.

If we decide in fact to unreservedly and truthfully answer Mary's invitation to make us creators and instruments of hope for the men of this time, welcoming and giving to our brothers, through Her, that same love of the celestial Lamb that illuminates the new Jerusalem, then Her Immaculate Heart will truly triumph throughout the universe, so as to allow the full and definitive victory of Christ to shine forth over all powers of evil and over all shadows of death that torment the world: *"Pray so that from your hearts a fountain of Love might flow forth over all men, and on those who hate you and scorn you; so with God's love you might be able to conquer all misery in that world of pain that is hopeless for those who do not know Jesus"* (Ref. Message 25.11.1991). □

The art of living the time

by Stefania Consoli

Our God has entered time, to sanctify it, to make it sacred and good. If lived in the light of grace, every instant contains bits of eternity, because in God everything expands, it loses its contours and takes on immense horizons, beyond all logic and measurement.

Everyone has experienced, at least once in their lives, how through a smile, a gaze or a word, love is capable of reaching us in our most intimate selves and giving our heart full joy, a sense of fulfilment that seems to have no beginning or end. Suddenly we feel in peace and in harmony with everything and everyone, everything seems favourable and even adversities seem to lessen. It is as though time were to stand still, and we would like to remain there, to enjoy that flash of peacefulness.

God, Love did this, entering our history: he filled it with himself, giving it immortality, transforming what sin had made corruptible and ended into eternal. Love, in short, that is the only force capable of overturning the inflexible laws of time and space and re-establishing the primordial balances.

A slave of clocks that implacably mark out commitments, occupations and duties, man worries, he runs or better said, he runs after time which seems to flee and never be sufficient. He would like to stop it to "succeed in getting everything done...". But he cannot! And so, distressed, he evades with his mind into ideal paradises or into unreal situations with the illusion of catching his breath, imagining a peace that is however only a fantasy.

We flee the present that we feel to be too tight, sometimes detesting it, but we easily forget that the Infinite has come to inhabit it, to extend our little view and to project our heart into the *beyond* that awaits us. The Lord became very tiny, to enter into humanity made of clay; but he wants to grow in us and with us, in time, to transform us into beings of heaven.

Those who know how to pray, know what it means. True prayer immerses us in a dimension where everything appears to be accessible, "visitable", if we really allow ourselves to be grasped by the Spirit. We can move freely, from one place to another, from one time to another, while remaining stable. It is the soul that goes... And while we savour the taste of full freedom, prayer also helps us to stop and ponder on the priorities of our daily life, to identify what is useless, and then only choose what is necessary.

Knowing how to manage our time is an art that God has given to us, offering us a history that bears traces of the incarnation of his Son everywhere, who came to visit it to give body and fulfilment to all of our actions. Jesus, beginning and end, *alfa and omega*... He is the metre stick with which we should measure reality, in order to experience it knowledgeably, to value all things that are created, every event, every hour, and to love it like He loves it.

If the "glory of God is living man", then

"Christian hope goes beyond the legitimate wait for a social and political liberation, because what Jesus began is a new humanity, that comes "from God", but at the same time, it germinates in this land of ours, in the measure in which it allows itself to be fertilized by the Spirit of the Lord. It is therefore a question of entering fully into the logic of faith: believing in God, in his plan for salvation, and at the same time, making a commitment to build his Kingdom. Justice and peace, in fact, are a gift from God, but they require men and women who are "good land", ready to welcome the good seed of his Word.

The firstling of this new humanity is Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary. She, the Virgin Mother, is the "pathway" that God himself prepared to come into the world. With all her humility, Mary walks at the head of the new Israel, in the exodus from all exile, from all oppression, from all moral and material slavery, towards "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness dwells" (2 Pt 3, 13). We place our trust in her maternal intercession, awaiting peace and salvation of men in our time".

(Benedict XVI, Angelus of 7th December)

living our time with passion and intensity, with respect and awareness of the opportunity that is given, means giving honour to the Author of time and eternity.

"I want to do ordinary things extraordinarily", Saint Teresina used to write. But this is only possible if we carry the very heart of the Loved one in our chest, seeking His face in all things, looking with His eyes, deciding with His criteria. Without running, so as not to allow the taste of life to escape us. If we always learn to choose the essential, we will in fact also be able to perceive what hurry often conceals from us: details that may perhaps seem insignificant, but that are unique and therefore beautiful.

Our God has entered the temple. He entered through Mary. A woman among women, but ample within, to the point where Immensity came to dwell in Her: a cradle to be born, a nest in which to grow, a mother to become a man. And living in the time, in little Nazareth, where only love, sacrificed in peace, marked out the days. □

LEARN PRAYER

Adoration and praise

This is the most glorifying form of prayer of the Most Blessed Trinity. We will only be able to understand it after having experienced our absolute inability to raise ourselves up and to enter into the mysterious divine world, if God himself does not take the initiative.

Men and women saints (men and women who were made experts in Trinitarian secrets) teach us that divine reality is so intensely bright that it is dazzling, it is so provocative that it produces absolute, blinding shadows. Because, even when God reveals himself and speaks, he always remains **He who is**, ineffable, transcendent, sublime, mysterious, **Other!**

In actual fact, throughout the entire extent of that immense library that is the Bible (Old and New Testament), God reveals himself through words, terms, expressions, images that seem to contradict each other. Symbols and images produce the sensation of cancelling each other out. In fact: God is merciful, patient, kind, gentle, ready to forgive... but he is also righteous, demanding, overwhelming, violent. Lamb and lion... friend and thief... lover and judge. Surprising. Always a bit beyond, a little more than what I could imagine.

Trinitarian words, expressions, images and symbols are all true in themselves. Each of them expresses a real quality. They are enormous windows, opened wide over unimaginable, extraordinary views. And nevertheless, they remain absolutely inadequate, impotent and incapable of expressing (each of them) the Trinitarian reality that infinitely transcends human reason. Biblical language is willingly obscure and apparently contradictory. It confuses concealed knowledge, the arrogant ambition of any science and human culture.

At the entrance to the evangelical school we find the following written in large characters: **"if you do not become like children,**

you will not enter the kingdom of heaven". To become like children...an apparently strange suggestion. Nevertheless, the only one that allows us to discover and set out in God's footsteps. This school teaches to accept God Trinity as he is, in his impenetrable otherness, in his unheard of and endless ability to surprise.

This is how the prayer of adoration and praise is born and flows forth, the hymn of the Amen, the Alleluia, the Hosanna. At the same time as I accept and welcome the Trinitarian obscurity, I allow myself to be enveloped in it and I answer with the embrace of my loving welcome that destroys all shadows of resentment, impatience, irritation and protest.

In fact: **AMEN is consent, acceptance, peaceful welcoming.** The happiness of saying to GOD: I am happy to be "nothing" and that You alone are everything!

This biblical Amen is mysterious. An Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin word. It cannot be translated. It expresses adoration as unconditional adhesion to God Trinity: the mind with faith, the will with hope, the heart with love. AMEN! A delicious hymn that begins in the temple, waits to explode, sacred and unchangeable, in eternity.

ALLELUIA! It too is a sacred word, brought by the Angels to the earth, untranslatable. From the Bible, it entered into the laudatory and eucharistic liturgy of the Church, constituting an endless mine. It expresses praise, approval, esteem, applause, admiration, exaltation, homage, glorification of God because he is God.

HOSANNA is on a par with Amen and Alleluia: it declares exultance, joy, enthusiasm, applauding consent. Explosive praise that illuminates time and stretches out, tirelessly, towards eternity.

The Holy Spirit urges Christ's disciples to identify themselves, to transform themselves into Amen, Alleluia, Hosanna, giving life to a tireless adoring prayer, the prayer par excellence on earth, remaining such also in Celestial Glory.

It can be put into practice anywhere: before the Blessed Sacrament exposed or enclosed within the tabernacle of the altar, before the icon of the Crucifix. In one's own home. Immersing ourselves in an elevating and solitary daily and nightly landscape. Sitting down, walking. For a few minutes or for a long time. With our mouth, with our heart. Let us acclaim, let us invoke, let us praise God the Most High, happy to know that he is present everywhere in the world, in the Church, in the soul, in the heart.

The Bible meets the adorers of the God Trinity offering the inestimable mine of 150 psalms, prayers in a poetic form inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are a special terrain for an authentic experience of God.

Praying the Psalms we, terrestrial Church, unite ourselves to the celestial Church to elevate a single hymn of praise, thanksgiving, exultance and supplication to God, pending the elating day on which the sun will never set.

(from: "Tirelessly" by *Lorenzo Netto*)

2. To be continued

BENEDICT XVI

"The Rosary is contemplative prayer"

"We need to personally experience the beauty and the depth of this prayer which is simple and accessible to everyone" explains the Holy Father at the end of the prayer of the Holy Rosary, recited in the Basilica of Pompei, dedicated to none other than the Virgin of the Rosary. "First of all, we need to allow the Virgin Mary to take us by the hand and we need to contemplate the face of Christ: a joyous, luminous, painful and glorious face. Those who, like Mary and with Her, guard and assiduously mediate on the mysteries of Jesus, assimilate his sentiments more and more and become conformant to Him.

The Rosary is school of contemplation and silence. At first sight, it may seem to be a prayer that accumulates words that are therefore difficult to reconcile with the silence that is rightly recommended for meditation and contemplation. In reality, this rhythmic repetition of the *Hail Mary* does not disturb interior silence, actually, it requires it and feeds it. As is the case for the Psalms, when we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, silence blooms through words and phrases, not like an emptiness, but like a presence of ultimate sense that transcends words themselves and with them, speaks to the heart. And so, reciting the *Hail Mary*, we need to be careful to ensure that our voices do not "cover" that of God, who always speaks through silence, like the "murmur of a light breeze" (*1 Kings 19,12*). It is so important then to take care of this silence full of God both in personal recitation and in community recitation! Even when it is prayed by large assemblies, it is necessary for the Rosary to be perceived as a contemplative prayer, and this cannot come about if there is no climate of inner silence.

The Rosary is contemplative prayer that is accessible to everyone: old and young, lay people and clerics, educated and less well educated. It is a spiritual bond with Mary to remain united with Jesus, to become like Him, to be like his feelings and behave like He behaved.

The Rosary is a spiritual "weapon" in the fight against evil, against all violence, for peace in hearts, in families, in society and in the world".

(Pompei, 19 October 2008).

*Lord Jesus, we are living in times in which efficiency, planning and tangible results are exalted. This is not the logic of your gospel and for this we give you thanks!
We remain in our furrow, we soak in silence, we mature in concealment, certain that this is the only "efficient" pathway that produces and continues to create a surprising dynamism of love!*

Brother Michael Davide

A safe bridge

At the beginning of December, many Italians took advantage of the four days of holidays called: "The long weekend of the Immacolata". It is a long weekend that starts with the feast of Saint Nicholas of Bari and then ends with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

Saint Nicolas is the patron saint of sailors, and during those days a protector of that kind was necessary for those who started out on their journey from Italy through a particularly choppy sea: a courageous journey to celebrate the "Virgin Mother, daughter of your Son, humble and high more than any creature..." (Dante Alighieri) in Medjugorje. With their pilgrimage, these people actually built a beautiful "bridge" over the sea, thus creating *the arch of celestial blessing* that accompanied them throughout their journey. A blessing that they had implored through prayers, sacrifices and renunciations. Interesting architecture...

In the song of the Dawn

In the liturgy of Advent, the Marian character is very much underlined, and this should not surprise us given Mary's specific role in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

In Medjugorje votive masses dedicated to the Most Blessed Virgin are usually celebrated, they are called "Rorate" or also: "Masses of the dawn". The Latin term "rorate" is taken from the entrance antiphon of the Mass: "Rorate caeli desuper..." and that is: "Drip from on high, oh heavens, your dew..."

At six o'clock in the morning, it is mostly young people and children who meet in church before school to sing with great enthusiasm to the sound of guitars, flutes and other instruments that are occasionally improvised, to accompany the eucharistic celebration. People gather in great numbers and bring with them an alert heart, brimming with that joy that is typical of the grace of Advent.

The presence of so many faithful does not merely originate from the desire to keep a beautiful tradition alive, but from the awareness that we must learn from Mary to wait for Christ, to listen to His word and to enter into the fulfilment of God's will. Mary becomes Mother of Christ because she is open to

the Word of God, because she welcomes the will of the Father with all her heart and she sacrifices herself fully for the work of her SonShe is the DAWN of the SUN from on high!

"It does not matter if you are a woman or a man as now once again we all become children of one God; children like He who is born of the Virgin He who was made man for our salvation... He, Light from true Light shines forth in our hearts and with His dazzling he quenches all obscurity..."

Who are the true inhabitants of Medjugorje?

Once, when passing along the road in front of the Church of Saint James, I asked myself: "Who are the true inhabitants of Medjugorje?" Here the people of Herzegovina live along with the many foreigners who work here: they too are citizens of this place, together with their families...

But Jesus' words suddenly came to mind: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers... My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8, 21). Yes, blood relations do exist, but the Master shows another link: the link in the Holy Spirit...

And once again I repeated the question to myself, but this time I extended it slightly: "Who are the **true** inhabitants of Medjugorje, who are the true heirs of this grace that has been given to the whole world?" Are they not perhaps those who listen to and allow themselves to be *shaken* by the invitation of the Queen of Peace? Are they not perhaps those who open their hearts to true, deep and effective conversion? Are they not perhaps those who for this generates fruits of peace, reconciliation, mercy, regardless of the place where they are or what they do? Are they not perhaps those who were "born" here at Mary's place and who welcomed her as their Mother and Queen?

Then I asked myself another question: "Am I among them?!" And smiling to myself I answered: "Perhaps, but there is lots to be done...and so: it's time to get to work!"

Father Jozo:

"Nothing is more important than a heart that prays"

"Every one of Our Lady's messages is a special gift and a solemn feast in the heart and in the soul. The mother speaks. Yes, the Mother of my God puts an end to the silence of her heart and speaks to her children, educating them and inspiring them by means of grace. I am always sincerely grateful for every message, for every word and for every pilgrim who honours the Queen of Peace, for every apostle of her messages. But the heart of Mary's message is one: prayer. Nothing is more important than a heart that prays. I have done nothing good in a day if I have not consecrated it and filled it with prayer and good deeds. My day lasts 24 hours. Today's rhythm of life pushes us to live a frenetic and tiring existence, to have the feeling of always being late. Time takes me away like a river, and it seems to me that I am not free. It is as though I have time for nothing and nobody. Everything is full, and yet empty; everything is a tireless and fruitless run.

The Queen of Peace invites me to fill my day with brief and fervent prayers. In this way, for example, when I'm driving to work, if I am unable to pray the rosary, I can pray with brief and fervent prayers. As I am tidying up my bedroom or as I am preparing lunch in the kitchen, I must learn to look at the Crucifix or the image of the Blessed Virgin and with brief prayers and invocations I must give myself in total abandonment to God. Even if my prayer is brief, it is capable of opening up my heart, so that I can receive special graces from the Lord.

Let us think back to the brief heartfelt prayers of our saints, which they used to keep in contact with God. Saint Francis of Assisi was constantly immersed in a unique thought and prayer: "My God and my Everything". In this way, he spent days and nights in union with God. The brief fervent prayer of the heart opens and raises up our hearts to God who gives us the strength and grace necessary for daily life.

We are called to bear witness to the presence and power of grace, and in this way to help all of those who have been overcome by evil. We cannot say that we do not have time, because this means that we do not love. Our Lady calls us to drive away and conquer the power of evil among us. Let us listen to her, She who is with us and intercedes for each of us.

Father Jozo

Our Lady's apparitions to Mirjana

December 2, 2008

"Dear children! In this holy time of joyful expectation, God has chosen you, the little ones, to realize His great intentions. My children, be humble. Through your humility, with His wisdom, God will make of your souls a chosen home. You will illuminate it with good works and thus, with an open heart, you will welcome the birth of my Son in all of His generous love. Thank you, dear children."

January 2, 2009

"Dear children! While great heavenly grace is being lavished upon you, your hearts remain hard and without response. My children, why do you not give me your hearts completely? I only desire to put in them peace and salvation - my Son. With my Son your soul will be directed to noble goals and you will never get lost. Even in greatest darkness you will find the way. My children decide for a new life with the name of my Son on your lips. Thank you."

Echo fully relies on readers' donations.

To all who have been instruments of Providence for Echo, enabling us to continue to help Mary reach her children, goes our heartfelt thanks, whom we remember especially in prayer and at Holy Mass.

If you desire a written response for your donation, please kindly request it. May God reward you and your loved ones onehundredfold!

ECHO on line: www.ecodimaria.net
E-mail: info@ecodimaria.net

Amazing.....!

We'd like to conclude Davide's story, the young man who rediscovered faith in Medjugorje, after many years spent in the cold subsurface of drugs.

The procession of joy

"The evening of the procession came through the streets of Medjugorje. "It's so boring!", I said to myself, imagining the sad processions that take place in my home town: head down and rosary... "What monotony!" A pizza would have been better! Circumstances had it though, that at the end of the dinner, the procession started along the road. In front of us there were young people from all over the world, waving the flags of their country: Austrians, Swiss, Italians, Croatians, Americans, Koreans...Some of them were singing, others were playing music and many of them were actually dancing! "Good heavens" – I said to myself – "it's not the usual procession! They aren't crying, they are rejoicing!" There was only one instant of perplexity before throwing myself in, but then I decided to taste everything that Medjugorje was giving me, and I threw myself into this interminable column of young people...I was rejoicing with them, even if I didn't know them nor did I understand their language; I really felt like I was walking together with many brothers. All with one love, Mary. I felt that this enormous line, consisting of thousands of people, was forming a single body.

We walked for several kilometres and I didn't even notice. It was incredible, during the procession I experienced the same shiver of elation that drugs give you, but that is only an illusion! What I was experiencing on the other hand, was pure reality. I was also under the impression that Our Lady had given me her hand, to walk with her. This was the most enthusiastic part of the entire pilgrimage. For the whole night I thought about what I had felt and with great difficulty I managed to fall asleep...

New Horizons... shining with the sunshine

Another important meeting awaited me the next day: the New Horizons Community. It houses young people who have managed to get out of drug addiction. I had already heard people talking about it on television and I had been struck by it.

As soon as I arrived, I noticed the face of these young people: their faces were shining like the sun...I told two of them my story, and then I listened to their stories. Truly impressive! These young people had experienced terrible suffering and hardship, more than I had. But now they were new people, emptied of the rot that drugs had created. It was incredible to see how these young people had decided to opt for the beauty of life. They had come in like corpses and now, thanks to prayer, faith and work, they had a new life under Our Lady's divine protection. In short, it wasn't the usual community with the atmosphere of a barracks! I almost felt a certain sense of envy upon seeing their way of being together, full of love towards each other...It was a beautiful sight to see their faces, which were once undoubtedly gloomy and now as bright as diamonds thanks to Mary's interces-

sion. What I saw there urged me to believe even more...

"Don't jump!"

During the course of the Festival it is possible to listen to various testimonies from young people whose lives were changed by Medjugorje. I remember one in particular, which struck me in the depths of my soul, perhaps because in a certain sense it was similar to mine, although much stronger.

It was the testimony of a young man who had been a very successful rock star in the past. Having become a millionaire thanks to the sale of his records, he owned enormous properties and led a very extravagant lifestyle. He was however tormented because he felt unhappy, actually he was decidedly depressed. Despite popularity, women, influential friends and lots of money, he continued to ask himself why he wasn't happy. He was so afflicted that one night he went onto the balcony of third floor of his villa, with the intention of committing suicide. Right when he was about to jump, something mysterious kept him from doing so...He started to cry uncontrollably and the Virgin Mary came into his mind. This was somewhat strange, given that his life consisted solely of sex, drugs and rock & roll...He therefore decided to discover what this Woman, who had prevented him from ending it all, wanted, and he left for Medjugorje. There the Virgin moulded him gently. His heart and his conscience, which hadn't existed before, were now burning with love towards God...But what made it more exceptional is that this young man then became a priest!

"Good heavens" I thought, "nothing is impossible for God! A young man without God had become God's spokesperson. What a great testimony! So many successful people around the world get totally depressed nowadays! They have everything in abundance... If only they would decide to open the door to Christ, they would suffer so much less...".

My sins, like snow in the sun.

A last great moment awaited me to complete my journey of inner healing. It happened at the end of a Holy Mass. There were many priests on the altar and they started to say a series of blessings, but before receiving them, you had to ask for forgiveness within your soul for the sins that they named...I felt myself freeze over due to the depth of those blessings and the truth of what they were saying: I had committed all those sins! Normally I don't like people seeing me crying, but the impact was too strong and I cried...cried...cried!

I asked for forgiveness for all the sins I had committed against God, against myself and against my neighbour, and I gradually felt that the Lord absolved me. I cried also because I felt so small before the Lord, who only asks you to repent, and then he forgives you.... True flashes of heaven!

The departure was foreseen for the next day. I was taken by bitterness, mixed with the insecurity of returning home, because I know that I would have found many temptations. I wanted to remain a little more....

He who hesitates is lost!

Returning to your own reality and seeking to continue the pathway born in Medjugorje

is not easy, the devil tries to make you forget the feelings you felt there, reducing them to a brief parenthesis that has now passed. We must always commit to remembering what has been lived and avoid the many distractions that are encountered in daily life. When you are in Medjugorje, you have an almost spontaneous urge to pray, but things are different at home. You must therefore *give yourselves* the gift of time to pray, although sometimes it is a burden to take the rosary beads into your hands...Whether you want to or not, this is a very important means that puts us into direct contact with Mary! If you *let go*, then you will slowly lose your faith. I experienced it in the past: he who hesitates is lost! Let us pray, even if we don't really want to, because he who asks it shall be given onto him...We often feel that Mary and Jesus are far away; it is not true, they are beside us, it is we who fail to perceive their presence because we allow ourselves to be distracted by the world!

If my testimony succeeds in making some young people rediscover faith – especially those who have a past similar to mine – I will be truly proud, because my existence has not been in vain, it will have borne fruit! A fruit that I now thought was dead within me, and that Mary exhumed making me feel all of her love, allowing me to understand how important I am for Her.

Let us pray! Because *nothing is impossible for God...*
Davide (end)

ON FOOT FROM POLAND TO MEDJUGORJE to implore reconciliation

Ms. Katarina Bednarczyk Sieminska (55 years old) from Kazimierz Dolny, near Lublin, walked for 62 days to go from Poland to Medjugorje. She embarked on this pilgrimage empty handed, putting her trust solely in God's providence, carrying only a cross, a breviary and a geographical map.

The prayer intention of this pilgrimage was peace in the world, the reconciliation of the whole of humanity, which constitutes a single family in God. Katarina is married to a painter and the couple do not have any children. Let's listen to her testimony:

"I walked to Medjugorje because the Mother and Queen of Peace appears in this site. It is clear that she is everywhere, but here she is present in a special way. The Most Blessed Mary wants to prepare us for the meeting with Jesus and with God the Father.

We are living in a difficult period, and I think that the time has come for the reconciliation of the whole of humanity. I received this intention in my heart as I was praying. We are all God's children and we need to go towards each other. It is as though humanity were in the midst of labour pains, we need to be aware of this!

All men are our brothers, and so I did not bring bread or water with me: I wanted to consciously and intentionally be dependant on those whom I met, trusting in their goodness. They often offered me food for the next stretch of road, but I did not except it. It is nice to ask, to request...People are happy when they can give something and it is at that moment that we feel that they are like our family. God works through them.

Interview: Fr. Marinko Stantić *spiritual counselor of the community Hosanna*

The community Hosanna is a branch of the community Merciful Father from Medjugorje. The house that is situated in Stari Žednik, a little town 15 kilometers from Subotica, in Serbia, is one of the three houses, which give shelter to men who suffer under addiction. Although the capacity of the house is limited to 12 persons, the community is accommodating 16 men, and needs are much greater. Prayer and work are an integral part of life in the community, just as in Medjugorje. Leaders of the community are those who are close to healing.

Fr. Marinko, you are the founder of this community. When was it founded and how did you decide to take this step?

The house was blessed on July 7, 2007. When I came for the first time with a friend to the Cenacolo community in Medjugorje, in 2005/06, I met there a young man from Sombor who spoke about his life, and who fascinated me with his story. At the end of my stay in the community, he underlined: "Father, if you want to open a community in Vojvodina, keep me in touch, because the need is great." I was fascinated by these words. The Lord gave a call, I answered, and so we started slowly. I was looking for sponsors, I found them, and now we go forward.

How did the inhabitants of Stari Žednik react to a community of this type in their town?

I want to pay tribute to the parishioners. They received the boys very warmly and they help them wholeheartedly.

What is happening in the community?

If someone wants to see resurrection with his own eyes, let him come to the community: he can touch it, it is a true resurrection. Those who were dead in every way are praising God now. Everybody is glad about a success: student because of a good mark, peasants because of the fruits of the earth, workers for a good pay, and we are glad when a bog leaves the community in good health. If someone wants to succeed in life, believe me, he will succeed only with God. God permits drugs, alcohol and other vices for men to feel how evil is strong, and to come back to God.

Those who want to help this community may visit the web page www.milosrdni-otac.com.

Ivana Zovko & Dragana Dugandzic

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Illumination of the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary on Apparition Hill

For New Year 2009, was finished the illumination of the paths and of the bronzes representing the Glorious mysteries of the Rosary. After the illumination of the Joyful Mysteries and of the path towards Our Lady's Statue (23.06.2006), and of the Sorrowful mysteries (24.12.2008), the illumination of the Glorious Mysteries (31.12.2008) means the accomplishment of the project of illumination of

Apparition Hill.

The illumination of the Mysteries of the Rosary and of Our Lady's statue was done thanks to the initiative of the pilgrims from Italy who financed the greatest part of the costs. The work was done by Rade Djida and his partners, and was supervised by ing. Vinko Kosir.

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Our readers write

Father Stanislao from Pula (Croatia) – Dear brothers, dear friends, I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to you for the "Echo" bulletin that I regularly receive and that I propose to friends who receive it in Italian. May the Queen of Peace reward you abundantly. In Echo I always find uplifting information and examples. Courage! A cordial salute.

Francesco Garrubba and Milena Iaschi from Noceto (Italy) - We'd kindly ask you to send us a few copies of your marvellous magazine, *Echo of Mary* Queen of Peace, to our home. We'd like to begin to distribute it within our parish and among our friends. We are truly enthusiastic about your publication. We assure you our contribution and the contribution of others, at least to cover your administration expenses.

Mario from Italy: Continue onwards, the Holy Spirit will know how to guide us all because Echo is a useful tool for Mary. Thank you for what you are doing, I send Echo to Africa by e-mail and they are very grateful to me for it.

Ermanno Polla from Bolzano (I) – Since 1990, my wife and I have been to Medjugorje on five occasions at regular intervals, to "re-charge our batteries" because it is from there that our "conversion" commenced, especially for my wife. However, I must tell you quite sincerely that if we had not had *Echo of Mary* between one period and another to keep us united like a thread to that blessed land and to the atmosphere that can only be experienced there, we would have had difficulty persevering on the pathway pointed out to us by Mary in her messages. Your writings are deep, they are cues for meditation, they are always respectful of the Teaching of the Church... I download Echo every two months from the Internet and whenever I was able to, I also sent a financial contribution.

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*"Oh Lord, in Thee I have trusted;
let me never be confounded!"*

(from the *Te Deum*)

Villanova M., 25 January 2009

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I was also refused on certain occasions, but that too was a positive experience. How many times God knocks on the doors of our hearts and we refuse him, we do not welcome him! And so we too must humiliate ourselves, like Him, and knock several times....

We meet Jesus also in those who have no home and in the poor and if we do not recognise him, then we are truly blind! Sometimes someone wants to steal something from us. We must also allow this to happen... We must not close our hearts: let us open them wide! People will be less aggressive...

How many times do we want to feel better than others, but God simply wants us to be good; being good does not mean being better than others! Let us ask the Lord to open our hearts, because we cannot change by ourselves. For this reason we must pray for each other.

At home we are not poor. My husband is a painter and he gave me the money for the journey, but I left it in Poland. If we want to worry about ourselves, then God cannot worry about us. We must experience the fact that He looks after us in everything!

This experience made me extremely happy. I am sorry for all those who do not believe in God: they think that they have to do everything by themselves and due to this they fail to find peace!

A few years ago I went on a pilgrimage on foot to Czestochowa with 25 kg on my back: I had everything... Back then I thought I needed it, now I have understood how ridiculous it was. Mary clearly said to me: if you want to follow my Son, you do not need anything. He will look after you.

I slept with families or in parochial houses. From Poland I passed through Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia, then Bosnia. I travelled through the regions inhabited by Muslims. I spoke to them. They do not know that God is the Father, and he is the same for everyone. But they were always happy to know that I was going to Medjugorje. They told me that they want peace, peace and only peace".

Called to "fulfil" the prophets

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets! I did not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mt 5, 17), Jesus said. After twenty-seven and a half years of apparitions in Medjugorje we too today, can see that God is revealing himself through tools that He freely chooses, as in the case of the visionaries; nevertheless, the message that they are sending can find fulfilment only if it takes form through each of us. In every message we must discover something that binds us and before which we cannot remain indifferent.

While humanity was looking worriedly towards its future and listening with trepidation to the tragic news on the uncertain situation in the world, the Heavens announced "Peace!", as the visionaries witnessed during the first days of the apparitions. Who does not feel bound by this word? Who is that believer, if he really is a believer, who does not feel called to reawaken in himself, all the dynamism of this message? And who does not know that peace in the world can only come through God? Our commitment is to welcome this word and to give it life. Let us not delay!

Tommaso di Francesco